News Releases - 2007

Michaela MacLeod wins the Prix de Rome in Architecture for Emerging Practitioners

Ottawa, April 12, 2007 — University of Waterloo architecture graduate Michaela MacLeod is the winner of the Canada Council for the Arts' Prix de Rome in Architecture for Emerging Practitioners. She will have the opportunity to research various design approaches taken to the reclamation of waste sites within North America and Europe.

The $34,000 Prix de Rome in Architecture for Emerging Practitioners is awarded to a recent graduate of one of Canada's ten accredited schools of architecture, who demonstrates exceptional potential. The prize winner is given the opportunity to visit exceptional buildings across the world, and to intern at an architecture firm of international stature.

Over the next year, Ms. MacLeod will investigate abused, neglected and contaminated waste spaces formed as a byproduct of industrialization within urban areas. She will examine how these spaces can be used as a catalyst for regeneration of the public realm. She will specifically focus on how ecological processes can be used as an open-ended design foundation for restoring these sites.

She will complete an internship in the office of Michael Van Valkenburg Associates Inc. This firm's approach to design reflects her own vision, where "…architecture entails working closely with the site itself: the complex, existing, multi-layered place that has been shaped through an entire history of natural and cultural processes." Ms. MacLeod will be asked to work on the development of ongoing building projects through physical models and drawings.

She hopes the research will culminate with a presentation at a symposium focused on the future of wastelands in Canada, organized by Ms. Macleod herself. Three themes would be explored. The first is Groundwork, Identifying contaminated sites with potential for change in Canada; the second is Initial Propagation, International inventory of reclamation projects of perceived waste sites; and the last one is Self-Organization, Canadian responses to reclamation in their infancy.

Ms. MacLeod was selected by an assessment committee consisting of architect Keith Graham of Fox Point, Nova Scotia; architectural historian Réjean Legault of Montreal; architecture journalist Maria Cook of Ottawa; architect Herbert Enns of Winnipeg and the Vancouver-based architect Vicky Brown.

The committee saluted Ms. MacLeod's interest in using ecological processes as an active agent in the design of landscapes, leaving the final shape of the design open to these outside forces. They agreed that this profoundly understated approach to design stands at the forefront of contemporary research, and that the first experiments in that direction

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need to be seen in the flesh. They trusted that Ms. MacLeod had the capacity to learn a great deal from her proposed travels, and the design skills to put this knowledge to profit. Most of all, they felt that Ms. MacLeod had the willingness and the charisma to share her discoveries with others and attempt to make a positive change in Canadian site remediation practices.

Michaela MacLeod

Michaela MacLeod received her Masters of Architecture degree (2005) and her Bachelor of Environmental Studies (2001) from the University of Waterloo. She also completed two undergraduate Foreign Studios at the University of Waterloo in Rome and University of Pescara in Italy (2001). Between her degrees, she took a year off and worked as a high school teacher in her hometown of Moncton, New Brunswick. She taught art studio, art history, and ancient medieval history. Her lectures were highly influenced by her visits to the churches, art galleries and ancient cities of Italy.

During her stay in Moncton, she became aware of the plight of the endangered Petitcodiac River and the decommissioned landfill on its shores. She decided to make it the focus of her thesis research. Her thesis received a commendation by the University of Waterloo in addition to the Ontario's Architects Association Guild Medal Award. She will be presenting her thesis to the members of the Moncton City Council in April 2007.

Since her graduation in September 2005, she has continued to work with the University of Waterloo. Ms. MacLeod has returned to Italy as an adjunct faculty member in Rome, assisting in a studio about *terrains vagues*. Back in Cambridge, her first year studio addressed the theme of dwelling. Ms. Macleod has been working in the Toronto firm Urban Strategies since May 2006. Urban Strategies is a planning and urban design firm working for public and private sector clients. She has worked on the Guelph Urban Design Action Plan, The Ottawa Escarpment Plan, and the Hobart Waterfront Design Competition. Ms. MacLeod lives in Toronto.

General information

In addition to its principal role of promoting and fostering the arts in Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2007, administers and awards prizes and fellowships to over 100 artists and scholars annually in the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural and health sciences, and engineering. Among these are the Professional Prix de Rome in Architecture, the Ronald J. Thom Award for early Design Achievement, the Killam Prizes, the Killam Research Fellowships, the Canada Council for the Arts Molson Prizes, the Governor General's Literary Awards, the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts and the Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts. The Council also works in collaboration with the

Royal Architectural Institute of Canada in the administration of the Governor General's Medals in Architecture.

For more information about these awards, including nomination procedures, contact Janet Riedel Pigott, Acting Director of Endowments and Prizes, at 613-566-4414, or 1 800 263-5588, ext. 5041, or Danielle Sarault, Acting Endowments and Prizes Officer, at 613-566-4414, or 1 800 263-5588, ext. 4116.

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